



From November 2019

Volume 107

NEPAL BLOG#2





Cover Picture: Two delightful children in Sikles.
The 'Namaste' was a perfectly naturel greeting

November 2019.

This second volume of 'Photo History' continues ...based on our blog that we faithfully posted every time we were able to get wi-fi in Nepal.

This includes that adventure day when we trekked for over 15 hours with a Search and Rescue party being sent out from Sikles to lead us back.

I hope with all these photos and my notes I can convey the very special beauty of both Nepal and the wonderful Nepalese people.

We were made so welcome and returned home with a feeling that neither of us have experience in our previous travels The wonderful school in Sikles and the wonderfully situated village of Tanting are not well known but are well worth trekking to.



This picture shows how isolated the village of Sikles is (taken from Tanting)



This picture shows how isolated the village of Tanting is (taken from Sikles)





Photo History



This was the lovely lady we met on our trek up to the village. She was a great character

Monday 18th November Arriving at Ghale Kharke



We received a warm welcome when we arrived at our 'Home Stay' in Bahjing Khola with silk scarves placed round our necks with marigold garlands and tikka red marks pressed on our foreheads and cheeks.

Two local ladies called asking if they could come later with other villagers to dance for us for around one hour. We were delighted and approx. 50 people turned up and it turned into a three hour party involving us. It was an amazing evening





The mud floor was brushed clean and all the fresh ingredients were prepared as we watched with the delicious result shown



Pasang relayed the invitation from our hostess for us to watch her making dhal bhat in her traditional kitchen



It was like theatre







Our trek lady now appeared
as a wonderful dancer too

...and our hostess/cook also
danced wonderfully



As suddenly as the party
started..it finished, as
everyone went home





...and the young daughter was totally confident and a delight to watch





The mud flooring is constantly wetted to avoid it cracking and keeping it smooth



We had a wonderful send off from our 'Home-Stay' with marigold garlands and tikka marks





Photo History

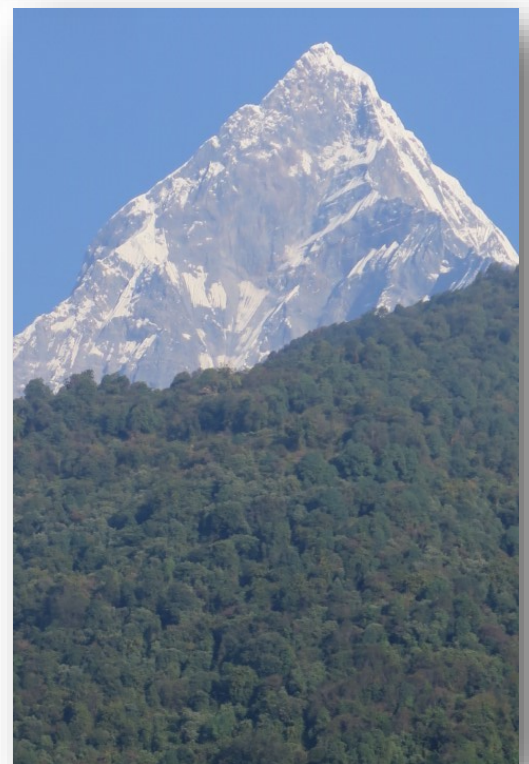


The climb from Ghale Kharke to Sikles was immediately incredibly steep...almost vertical. With our guide and our two Sherpas carrying very heavy backpacks and many other necessary items, we all had to frequently stop to catch our breath.



With spectacular views we trekked through jungle and woods.

The trek followed trails that were not well known, but after starting at 7.45am we anticipated an arrival at Sikles at around 3.00pm....Wrong!!





Lynn spotted this magic ray of sunshine...so glad I've always got my camera





Photo History



As we were still only halfway through our trek it became increasingly obvious that we would not make it in that time as darkness was rapidly approaching.

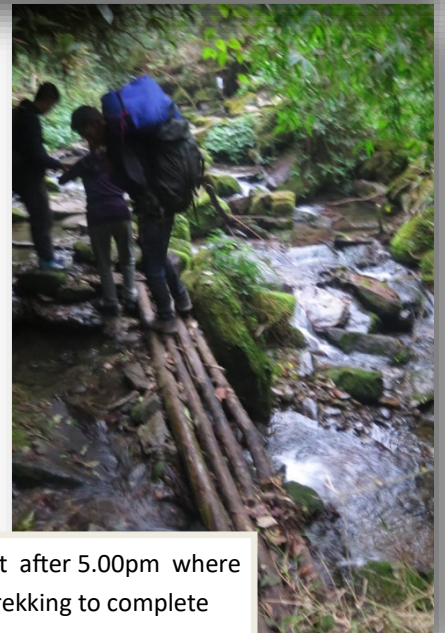


We stopped at this porters rest for a well-earned short break

We discussed whether to overnight in a barn or phone Siles, reception permitting, for assistance. By now it was 6.00pm and pitch dark and Sikes was still



The path became increasingly difficult to follow and ill-defined with many fallen trees, landslides and small rivers to negotiate



We had started at 7.45am and this was the point after 5.00pm where the small sign told us we still had over 5 hours trekking to complete



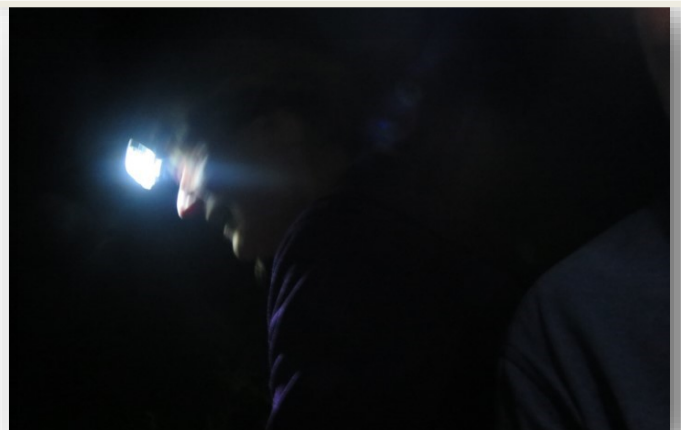
Photo History



As darkness was total and Lynn and I only had head torches Pasang managed to get a phone signal . Two rescuers set out on the six hour round trip with hot tea and torches to assist us. We were overjoyed when we saw their lights through the trees. The six of us then slowly made our way back on the perilous trek along narrow paths, sheer drops and rivers to cross, only illuminated by the small light of our torches. Added to this so many fallen rocks and fallen trees obscuring the trail made our night trekking unbelievably hazardous. This would have been extremely difficult even in daylight.



We descended into Sikles at 11.00 pm...after trekking for 15 hours we were by now totally exhaustedbut what an adventure.





Pasang bought us freshly cooked breads with a hot drink of lemon, honey and ginger



When we woke to see the fantastic location of our 'Home Stay' we were fascinated. At nearly 2000 meters there were clouds deep in the valley below us. Marigolds everywhere and steep steps winding throughout the traditional houses.. Everyone we passed smiled and said 'namaste' to us







Photo History



Corn on the cob was dried and used as animal feed.

In the terraced rice paddies below oxen were used for threshing in the traditional way.

Rice was dried in traditional stacks







Photo History

Our 'Home Stay'



It is very usual for children to look after their younger sibling



The local water supply



Photo History



Very little level space but these boys still managed to play volleyball here





All the children we met were like these girls...smiling and totally delightful



The traditional dress is very colourful and looks wonderful in this background





Photo History



Gesuba, the assistant head teacher had been communicating with us for a long while and came down to accompany us back to Sikles School

21 November 2019
Programme schedule

- 11:00 arrive school
- welcome by students and teachers
- Formal programme start
- Welcome speech
- Welcome dance
- Handover the donation and other goods by Ralph and Lynn to school team
- Respect the guest by token of love from school side
- Speech by guest
- Speech by village leader
- End of the formal programme
- Observation of Library, science lab and computer lap
- Tea time

Thank you

This is the schedule the school had prepared for us for the following day

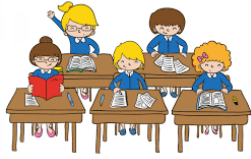
Once this new school building is completed the upper school will join the primary school on this site

The small playground precariously situated on the hillside is temporarily used as a building site





Photo History



As we looked into the class-rooms we were greeted with smiles





Photo History

This gentleman prepared food and tea in his 'under the stairs' mobile kitchen



The headmasters study







Photo History

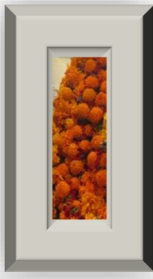
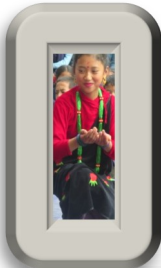


The older girls lined up in a welcome passage placing many marigold garlands round our necks and red tikka markings on our faces.

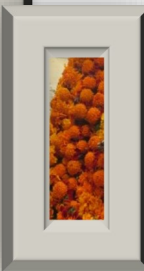
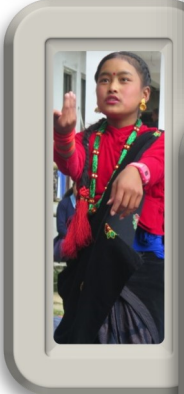
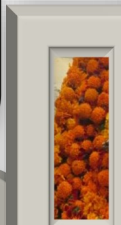
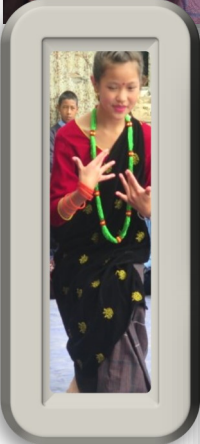
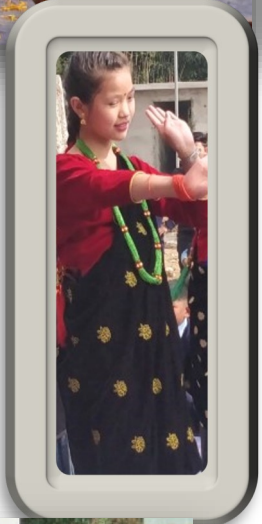




Photo History



They then danced for us In traditional costumes with beautiful expressive gestures all of which they were taught in the school. Petals were thrown from the baskets





Gesuba in her traditional costume and Lynn with the weighty marigold garlands, face tikka and a local craft





Photo History



We were overwhelmed by the warmth of the hospitality and welcome we received from the children, the teaching staff, the local dignitaries and village people. The gentleman (top left) was the (now) retired headmaster who was at the school when I came in 1988





They presented us with this delightful 'Token of Love' which is now proudly displayed at home



We presented the certificate and the donations from all our friends which totalled \$1110 dollars which apparently was the best private donation they had received and we got the lovely letter of appreciation shown on the next page



Photo History



श्री अन्नपूर्ण माध्यमिक विद्यालय SHREE ANNAPURNA SECONDARY SCHOOL

मादी गाउँ पालिका, सिकलेस, कास्की

(Madi Rural Municipality-1, Sikles, Kaski)

पत्र संख्या (Let. No.):

चलानी नं. (Ref. No.):

स्था.: २०१३ (Estd.: २०१३)

मिति (Date): २०७६-०८-०५

Dear Ralph and Lynn and all Sikles
lover people UK.

We are Very grateful for your great
Support for our school. We are very thankful.
Here we have listed the materials which
needed for our school soon.

The listed materials are :-

- (1) Desk Top Computer - 2
- (2) Portable Sound system (speaker) - 1
- (3) Multi plug - 5

Thank You.

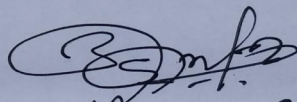
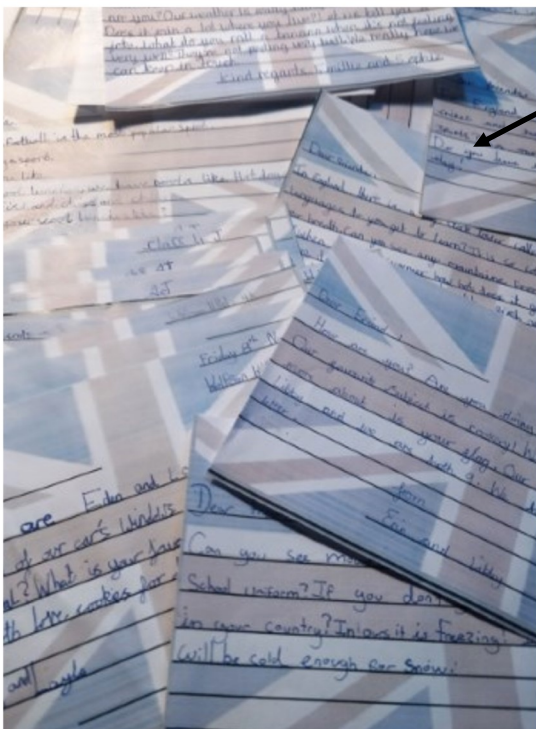
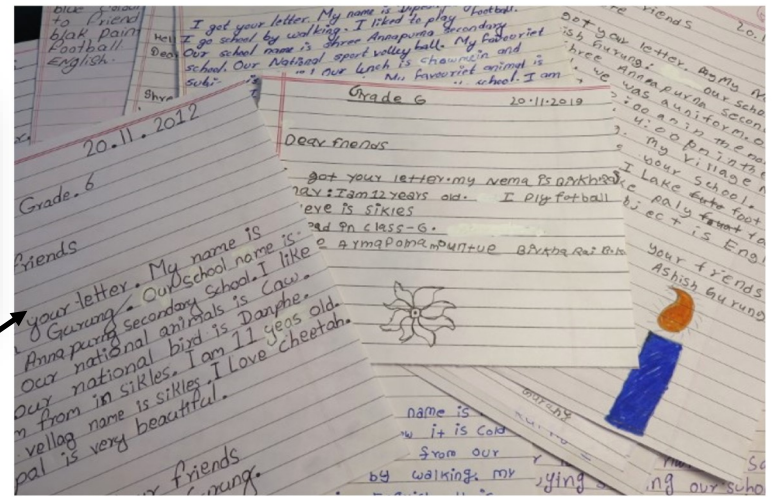

(Uttam Kumar Shrestha)
Head Teacher
Head Teacher



Photo History



The letters from
Sikles School



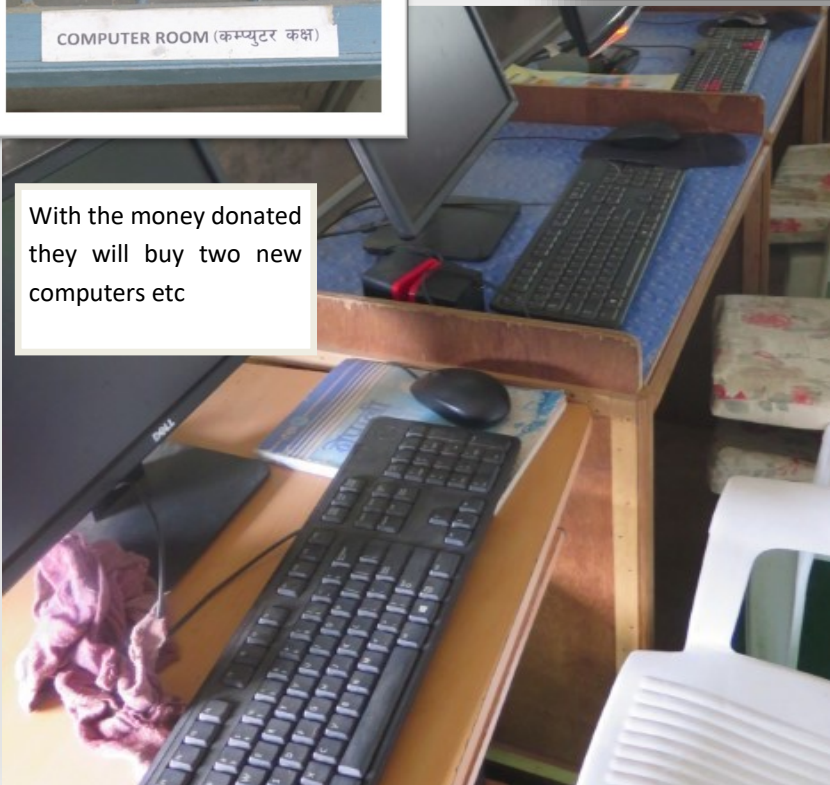
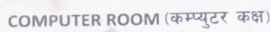
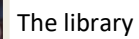
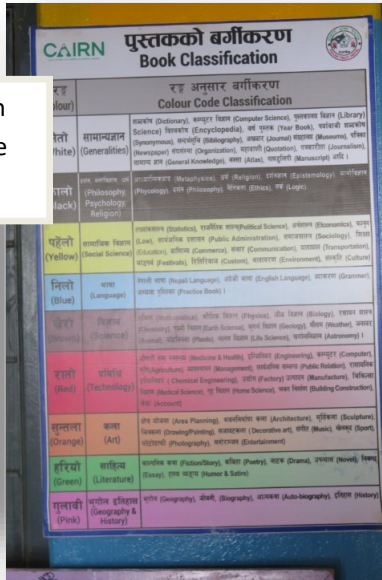
We took 60 messages from the great children in Wolfson Hillel School in Southgate (see left) and these were answered by the great children at Sikles School in Nepal.

Here they are being shyly given by two children and Gesuba, the Assistant Head teacher (see left)





...yes, the facilities re very basic, but the children are getting a great education. Those books in the small library are the ones we sent earlier



With the money donated
they will buy two new
computers etc



The science labs



...so we are making a very tangible difference





Photo History



This is the school playground while the building work is underway



This is our final look back at Sikles School...a very special place for us

This view below is of the school from Tanting just across the valley, but in reality possibly a ten hour trek away

The school







The observation tower was an unexpected feature





Views around Sikles





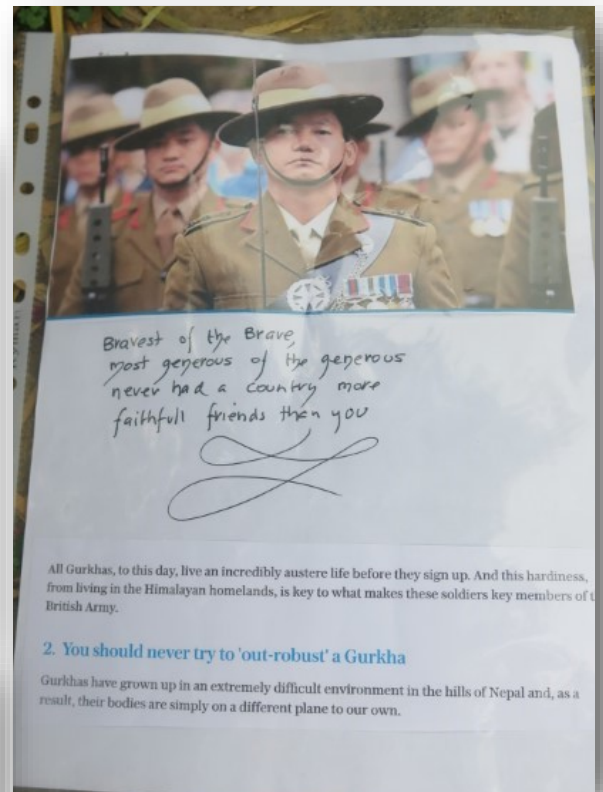
We feel that Sikles will not change too much in the future as it sits on the hillside above terraced field making access difficult and mechanised farming virtually impossible. As the youngsters become more educated they leave the village and as the older people become unable to continue the very labour intensive farming on very difficult terrain it will inevitably bring about changes unless tourism is encouraged to trek 2000 meters from Pokhara. This is a totally unique location and local people are wonderfully friendly and hospitable. The whole experience here left a very deep and lasting impression on Lynn and myself







A mock up of a traditional local kitchen



We bought this message from Roy in Southgate to show UK appreciation for the Gurkhas. We took it to the small museum where they are framing it and putting it on show



Museum exhibits



Picking fresh tea leaves



Presenting the message to the museum



Photo History



Leaving Gurung Cottage was
a very sad memorable time





Photo History









Photo History

Leaving The Gurung Cottage at Sikles was very emotional. We were so sad saying goodbye to Gesuba. The delightful owners of the hotel and Gesuba presented us with the traditional silk scarves and blessings of red face markings with garlands of orange marigolds.

Leaving Sikles on the trek down into the Mardhi River valley deep below and then back up to Tanti high on the opposite side



The young girl from our Home Stay followed us out of the village and Sagar had to explain to her that she had to return home





Friday 22nd November 2019. Sikles to Tanting

Tanting, another isolated village, on the opposite mountain from Sikles could be seen, clouds permitting, but the descent into the valley and up again made it a very long and gruelling journey

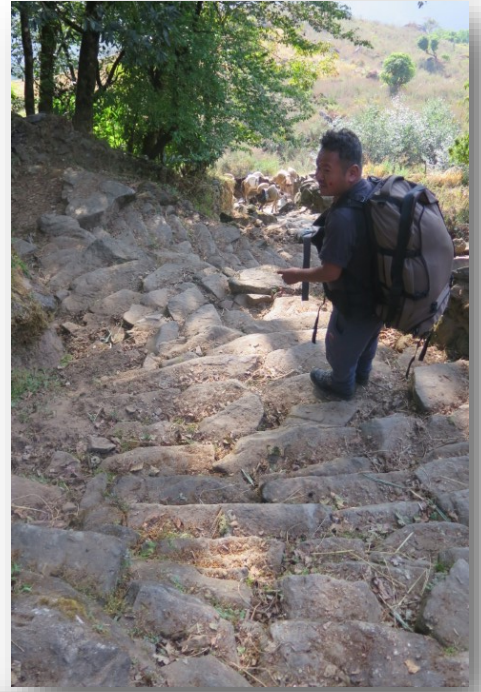
The path descended extremely steeply as we passed a sign indicating that Tanting was 3 hours walk away. Maybe by the sure-footed Nepalese but certainly not by us. The path down was stone steps through woods and terraced rice fields with water buffaloes and rice-pack-laden donkeys passing us.

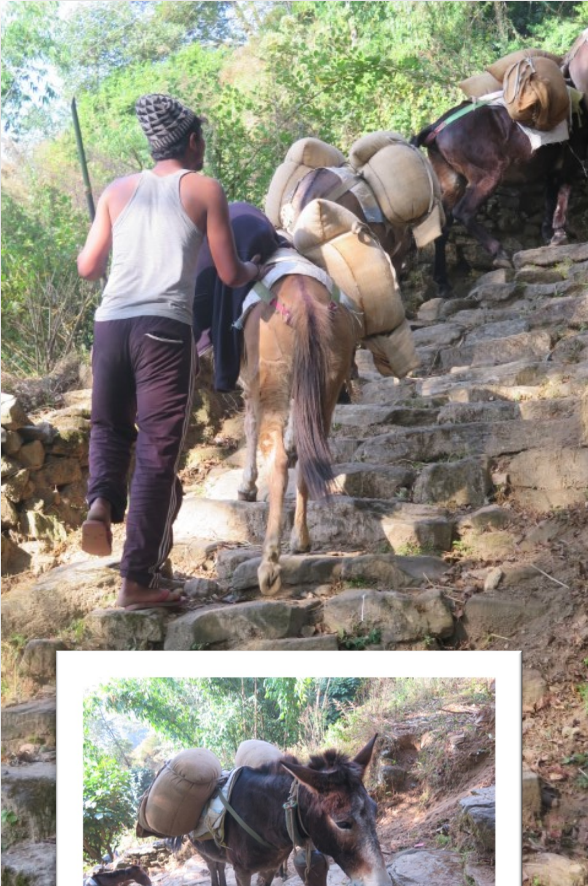
We could see the rushing Mardi Khola (river) in the valley bottom, approaching a long metal bridge swaying frighteningly high above the thunderous river.





Photo History





As we were surrounded by a whole pack of donkeys and water buffaloes slowly negotiating the steep steps Pasang made the executive decision that we should use an alternative route ...which was a wise (and quicker) choice





A well-earned rest because the descent was really hard. Our destination can just be seen at the top right of the picture





The very tiring steep trek needed frequent stops to regain our breath and this reinforced bridge crossed the Mardhi Khola swaying alarmingly. Lynn gritted her teeth and actually managed to smile as she bravely crossed it

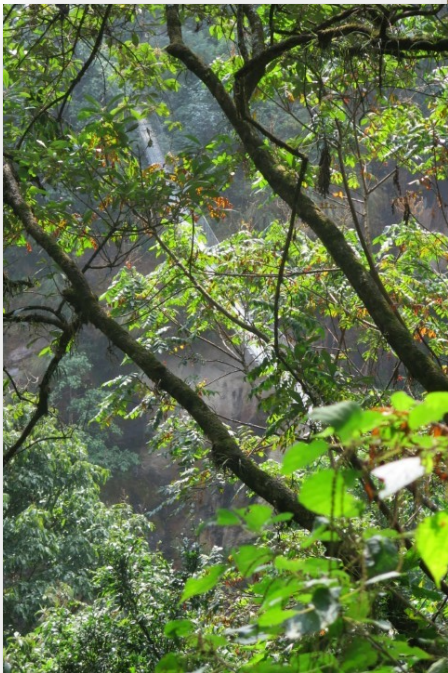




Photo History



This trek had already taken us over three hours so we cadged a lift from a hydro electric company Land Rover with workers going for lunch in Tanting. This road trip will remain etched in our minds forever. A precipitous drop at the side of the rock-strewn unmade dusty road shook us to pieces and took us over 50 very scary minutes (we realised that the workers made this journey daily for lunch). Had we attempted to trek, this would have taken us several more hours.



Again, Tanting like Sikles, on the sides of steep hills have no roads, but steep uneven stepped paths between all the traditional houses and everywhere the friendly people greeted us with 'Namaste' as they carried out their arduous daily routines. The terraced fields of rice, potatoes and millet were just below the houses and we saw brightly-coloured parrots flying above and monkeys racing across the fields.





Photo History



The fascinating surroundings around Tanting





The Home Stays seem to be the hub of the villages with a constant flow of locals coming and going. They are keen to promote themselves to encourage tourists to this wonderful unknown region of Nepal.

Obviously, there are no hotels or guest houses in these isolated communities and Home Stays are normal. These are traditional houses in villages offering food and lodging of a simple traditional nature usually with no hot water and always with very basic facilities. We were greeted at our Home-Stay with traditional marigold garlands and a sweet black tea.





Totally unexpectedly, a group of smartly uniformed schoolchildren passed below carrying protest banners and chanting about the terrible state of their water supply.

Tinsing is a very isolated village approx. 2000 meters high so when we saw these smartly uniformed kids with such a positive attitude it was very reassuring



This shows how locals treat their natural watercourses. This is mainly by the older folk and the school is encouraging the youngsters to care for their environment